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Promising Practices for Equitable Dual Enrollment

Five strategies for coaches, counselors, and mentors seeking to expand access and increase success¹

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Executive Summary

This brief considers the efforts of high school networks, community colleges, and nonprofit partners to build stronger webs of support for dual enrollment (DE) students in the Los Angeles region. In particular, it details the practices employed by dedicated coaches, counselors, and mentors to improve participation rates and support student success in the present as they work to strengthen their dual enrollment models to continue advancing equity. These approaches have the potential to be especially impactful in contexts that lack formal dual enrollment partnerships or are looking to build capacity to support equitable dual enrollment. **What can school counselors and mentors at high schools, community-based organizations, and open-access institutions learn from these strategies?**

To expand access, boost success, and promote equity for students who could benefit from dual enrollment opportunities, this brief highlights five potent strategies that high school counselors and non-profit coaches are positioned to employ:

1. Examining the local context
2. Adopting proactive advising strategies
3. Engaging with families early and often
4. Making space for community and developing college knowledge
5. Identifying industry, career, or major-aligned sequences

¹ A report to the Los Angeles Scholars Investment Fund (LASIF)'s Broadening the Dual Enrollment Narrative (BROADEN) Initiative at the California Community Foundation

Conversations with key individuals from partner organizations of the California Community Foundation (CCF) seeking to advance equitable dual enrollment, alongside findings from youth action researchers and an ongoing landscape scan, inform the key recommendations highlighted in this brief. Recommendations are based on key points of alignment between promising practices currently employed in the Los Angeles area, pain points identified by youth researchers, and a review of the evidence linking participation in dual enrollment courses to better and more equitable post-secondary outcomes.

When implemented with care, dual enrollment has the potential to help lower barriers and streamline the transition between high school and post-secondary education. By adopting some or all of these promising practices, counselors and mentors can help students succeed in their dual enrollment courses in the present while laying the groundwork for equitable dual credit programming that provides more opportunities for students to engage in the future.

About the Author

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Introduction

Long viewed as an option suited primarily for high-achieving students, dual enrollment programs have drawn increasing attention from high schools, non-profits, and community colleges as an avenue for improving access to higher education and promoting better outcomes for students once they arrive on college campuses.

Dual enrollment (sometimes termed concurrent enrollment or dual credit) typically refers to courses taken by high schoolers that confer both high school and college credit. Dual enrollment programs take on a range of forms, from online courses hosted by elite universities, to commuter programs that see students moving back and forth between high school and college campuses, to early college high schools (ECHS) that host dual enrollment courses on site within the high school itself.

The landscape of dual enrollment varies widely across the country. While an estimated 1.5 million students participate in dual enrollment, only around 5% of these students are enrolled in intensive ECHS programs (Fink 2023). The majority of students must make their way through a more decentralized system. Students in these less formal contexts rely on their counselors, teachers, and mentors to learn about opportunities to earn college credit while in high school as well as for support in their dual credit courses. This means that high school, non-profit, and community college support staff all have a key role to play when it comes to helping students tap into some of the promising benefits of dual enrollment programs.

This brief describes how education institutions and their partners can best support youth who participate in dual enrollment while providing more on-ramps for access to students who might benefit but have been traditionally under-enrolled. In keeping with the collaboration required to support students in dual enrollment courses, this brief summarizes key learnings from the literature, from youth who participate in dual enrollment, and from organizations that support dual-credit students.

Centering students and organizations in this brief was critical for two reasons. First, the California Community Foundation was interested in hearing directly from those closest to the issue and considering how these findings from their partners in the Los Angeles area might inform broader efforts to improve dual enrollment outcomes. Thus, guidance needed to stem from the needs of students themselves and the existing practices that have been shown to help address those needs rather than proposals that do not accurately reflect the existing landscape. Second, as a former Success Coach and youth development professional myself, I was wary of handing down guidance that ignored the domain-specific knowledge that educators have developed through years of serving students or the very real constraints that they may face in terms of resources, staffing, and scheduling.

Building on this foundation, this brief will offer five practice areas that youth-organizations and institutions interested in expanding access and promoting success in dual enrollment coursework

might consider implementing in their own programs. In doing so, I hope to provide an actionable roadmap to expanding access and success with emphasis on practical, evidence-based approaches that address key pain points identified by youth who participate in dual enrollment. Finally, this brief will offer a look at the road ahead for programs, schools, and districts seeking to move beyond unfocused “à la carte” dual enrollment (Fink 2023) and collaborate more effectively to support student success.

Learning from the Literature

Emerging and established literature points to dual enrollment as a potential driver of college success. The transition to college presents all students with a new and complex environment characterized by unique sets of practices, vocabularies, and meanings that may not be apparent to a newcomer (Strayhorn 2014). By providing early exposure to college level work alongside knowledge of this “hidden curriculum,” dual enrollment courses can help students navigate the transition to post-secondary education (Kanny 2015). Indeed, a broad base of research has emerged pointing to dual enrollment as a promising, evidence-based practice for boosting high school graduation, college enrollment, and degree completion (Perry 2023).

Other studies confirm some of these trends while pointing to a more complex relationship between dual enrollment participation and student achievement, particularly when considering the experiences of first-generation and under-represented students. In a study conducted in Nebraska, dual enrollment participation was positively associated with high school graduation, college matriculation, and college persistence (Lee 2021). A 2019 meta-analysis also found positive associations between dual enrollment, college persistence, and degree attainment, though the authors cautioned that white, high-SES, and high-achieving students are more likely to participate in dual enrollment offerings (An & Taylor 2019). The evidence is also mixed for students of color and first-generation college students, with some studies finding greater impacts for historically under-represented students (Lee 2021) and others reporting smaller impacts (Dynarski 2023). What accounts for these differences? How can the benefits of dual enrollment be distributed more equitably?

To make dual enrollment more equitable, recent reviews have called for state and system-level interventions, like eliminating placement test requirements (Sparks 2024) and ensuring smoother credit transfers (Steiger 2023). Drawing on guided pathways reforms, state policy recommendations also emphasize developing clear pathways and offering financial support for dual-enrolled students (Mann 2023) as well as establishing funding models that support more intentional program designs (Perry 2023). Practices like intrusive advising and developing partnerships (Mehl 2020) have gained traction, while the successes of CUNY’s “College Now” model demonstrates the positive impact of added supports like skills seminars on college GPA and post-secondary degree attainment (Allen 2012). However, it remains to be seen how individual counselors and non-profit support staff can best facilitate successful dual enrollment outcomes as these broader policy changes come into focus.

Efforts to expand access to dual enrollment programs must also take into account the factors that enable student success as well as the potential risks for students that enroll in college courses while in high school. Studies suggest that increasing access to college-level coursework, while a good first step, is not sufficient on its own to promote higher rates of graduation and matriculation; students must also have access to academic support, financial resources, and advising services in order to be successful (Sparks 2024). Sense of belonging also looms especially large for high school students gaining exposure to college courses for the first time. High school-aged participants in dual credit courses tend to appreciate the exposure to the college environment and the independence afforded to them but lament feelings of disconnection and lack of support (Kanny 2015). Some students have even reported feelings of judgment from college classmates based on their nontraditional status or negative comments from professors about teaching high school students (Kanny 2015). This illustrates the added challenge faced by DE students as they navigate between their high school and their college communities.

Furthermore, enrolling in a college-level course does come with a particular set of risks for high school students. Failing a dual enrollment course comes at a high cost, as a failing grade can impact eligibility for financial aid and discourage students from pursuing similar opportunities in the future in addition to impeding high school graduation (Kanny 2015). Online courses also present a potential avenue for increasing access to varied course offerings, but need to be supplemented with the “college knowledge” conferred by in-person experiences on college campuses to have the greatest impact (Perry 2023). Setting out to enroll as many students as possible in dual enrollment courses risks oversimplifying the task at hand. Instead, it seems that the available literature suggests that counselors and advisors that consider the local dual enrollment landscape, the goals of their students, and the resources available to support them can help give their students the best chance to succeed.

Learning from Youth Who Participate in Dual Enrollment

To better understand the student perspective, CCF supported a team of youth action researchers in examining the experience of youth who participate in dual enrollment. In their final report, youth action researchers paint a vivid picture of dual enrollment programs in the Los Angeles area, identifying some key assets as well as some problems both lingering and emergent (LASIF BROADEN Student Action Research Fellows 2023). This brief will highlight some particularly salient findings in an effort to center the voices of youth in this discussion of promising practices.

Student researchers reported that high school counselors served as vital sources of information and encouragement, driving home the significance of the counselor in cultivating possibilities and stoking the fire when it comes to dual enrollment participation. Some high school students spoke highly of the college-going culture at their high schools fostered by alignment between teachers, professors, and counselors with regard to the ways in which dual enrollment programs are discussed, marketed, and facilitated. Messages around earning college credit and saving money on a degree were particularly resonant along with an emphasis on the value of early exposure to college life.

Accordingly, students that participated in dual enrollment appreciated the opportunity to gain familiarity with the demands of college work and accelerate their progress. This opportunity to develop familiarity with the rigor, structure, and expectations of college courses provides participants with valuable “college knowledge” that applies across disciplines. Students tended to prefer dual enrollment courses over AP courses due to the emphasis placed on their work over an entire quarter rather than a single test in addition to the valuable knowledge conferred about what it takes to be successful in college. Professors were cited most frequently as the primary factor in promoting success, though high school teachers, support staff, and mutual assistance from peers were also recognized for playing a prominent role.

However, dual enrolled students also encountered some significant barriers to success in their courses. In general, integrating the rigors of dual enrollment courses with the typical demands of high school presented a challenge for many students. Students appreciated when they were granted flexibility on deadlines and offered a clear picture of course expectations by their professors, but noted that some professors were more understanding than others when it came to accommodating the needs of high school students. As students under 17 comprise a growing proportion of community college students nationwide (Perry 2023), accommodations like these will be important for community colleges to consider alongside existing supports for working students and students with families.

Limited access to academic supports like tutoring as well as to their professors made it more difficult for students to seek support when they needed it. Course availability also impeded participation in some cases. Students expressed a desire for more program-aligned courses, such as major prerequisites or advanced STEM courses, in contrast to the general education offerings that tended to be made available, as well as for courses that fit better alongside their high school schedules. When it came to their counselors, students reported a few specific pain points, such as a relative dearth of counselors with deep knowledge about course sequences and transfer pathways. In addition, students expressed a desire for more proactive advising services that provided support early and often during the semester.

Along these lines, student researchers offered a number of recommendations for improving dual enrollment programs. For example, simple administrative practices like automatically dropping students who do not attend the first few classes rather than leaving them on the class roster can protect high school students from receiving failing grades or withdrawals on their transcripts. This report will spotlight a few recommendations that are especially relevant for counselors, coaches, and advisors as they relate to the recommendations offered later on, but policymakers interested in the structural components of effective dual enrollment programs would also benefit from considering the voices of students more broadly. What emerges across the report is the importance of access to knowledgeable counselors and opportunities to build community as well as the positive impact of effective collaboration between high schools and college support staff.

Learning from Organizations that Support Dual Enrollment

Following the release of the student action researchers' report, researchers at the John W. Gardner Center sought to understand the practices that organizations leading the way on dual enrollment supports have had success in implementing as well as the barriers to student participation that persist. To do so, researchers engaged in dialogues with key program staff members and dual enrollment champions to put these valuable insights into context and better understand the practices employed by the partner organizations to support their dual-enrolled students. These partners included high school networks and districts, non-profit CBOs, and community colleges.

A few consistent throughlines emerged across conversations with staff members working to support dual-credit students in colleges, high schools, and nonprofits. While expanding access to dual enrollment opportunities means grappling with the administrative hurdles associated with aligning courses across multiple education settings, community leaders across the secondary and post-secondary landscape also identified dual enrollment as a powerful avenue for students to find community, access support services, and expand their visions of what is possible in the future.

High schools play a central role in the dual enrollment ecosystem. High schools deploy a wide range of strategies, from hosting courses on-site to providing supplemental seminars to support students in their courses. Yet high schools must also navigate a range of administrative challenges to enable participation in dual enrollment. Access to instructors that are certified to teach dual credit courses presents one such significant barrier. For instance, one high school leader noted that, despite persistent attempts to obtain approval, none of their teachers had been authorized to teach dual enrollment courses by their local community college.

Course offerings can also be limited, leading some students at a dedicated ECHS to enroll in online courses despite having a community college branch around the block. Turnover among college advisors also poses a challenge to high school staff and administrators. For example, the loss of a key college partner can impede the ability of high school staff to get timely insights into student performance and it takes time to rebuild these relationships. Finally, questions persist about the requirements that students must meet in order to participate in dual enrollment, with thresholds like GPA requirements making it more difficult for students to access dual enrollment offerings. Yet college-level courses also come with higher expectations and demand that high schools provide additional support to help students succeed.

Nonprofit organizations provide vital connective tissue for dual-enrolled students, bridging the divide between high schools and colleges while developing innovative, culturally-relevant approaches to dual enrollment programming. Staff turnover presented a major hurdle for nonprofit staff with regard to forming strong relationships with high schools. In some cases, however, nonprofit mentors have been able to fill knowledge gaps around credit transfer and graduation requirements as the phasing out of pandemic-era restrictions has made it easier to establish new connections. Nonprofits are also

able to provide targeted services for underserved youth populations like recent immigrants and foster youth. Nonprofit staff also noted that participants in dual enrollment can gain confidence in themselves, access services from their colleges like free transportation, and begin to develop more concrete post-secondary aspirations, among many other benefits. Despite logistical challenges, the experiences of the nonprofit partners help illustrate that the impacts of dual enrollment can go far beyond the accumulation of college credits.

Finally, open-access institutions and community colleges play a critical role in facilitating access to college-level courses. Colleges must navigate conflicting schedules, unique demands on professors, and bureaucratic challenges to provide dual enrollment offerings. Many high schools have different priorities when it comes to dual enrollment, placing strain on colleges to provide services for everyone. The lack of a common framework or set of best practices was identified by one school leader as a major obstacle, while another pointed to the lack of solid partnerships. Although the college staff members interviewed were generally aligned on the value of dual enrollment offerings, they also wondered if there was an opportunity to adapt their schedules and their teaching methods to better align with the needs of high schoolers in order to make dual enrollment truly accessible. While traditional views of dual enrollment offerings emphasize advanced courses or general education requirements, colleges might also consider offering more accessible on-ramps that give students a sense of what it's like to take a rigorous course while addressing skills gaps in foundational subjects like math and writing.

Promising Practices for Increasing Access and Success

Amidst these challenges, what can school counselors and nonprofit mentors do to give their students the best chance to succeed? The stories shared by staff members, counselors, and school leaders, coupled with the youth perspectives gathered by youth action researchers, point to five promising practices that educators and youth development professionals can learn from. These strategies are currently being practiced by schools and nonprofits in the Los Angeles area and are supported by youth voices as well as the available body of research. While more work needs to be done to understand the outcomes and impacts specifically for dual-enrolled students from groups that have been historically underrepresented in higher education, these five practices can help build a foundation for equitable access and greater success.

Practice Area 1: Understand the Local Context

The dual enrollment umbrella encompasses a wide range of course offerings and state policy frameworks. Before launching an access initiative or offering guidance to students, it's worth taking a step back to look first at the local landscape and then attend to the particular needs of the individual students being served. In the LASIF BROADEN report, students reported that they appreciated when their counselors were well-versed in the dual enrollment ecosystem and able to offer practical guidance about which courses to take and how courses might be connected into a longer sequence. Key questions to answer include:

- What courses are available for students? When and where are they being offered?
- How many students in your and/or other schools/programs currently participate in dual enrollment? How many of them are typically succeeding in a given semester?
- How responsive is the local college to the needs of dual-enrolled students?
- What do students hope to get out of participating in dual enrollment?

Conversations with program staff provided valuable insights about the importance of understanding the needs of students and the environment they will be entering. Dual enrollment courses have the potential to be overwhelming for high school students, who may not be accustomed to the demands of college-level work. High school staff noted that the stakes for dual-enrolled students can be especially high. A college student might have the option to drop a class, for instance, but high schools do not have the option to drop a student that still needs a class for the entire year. Thus, taking time to understand the particular nature of dual enrollment in a local context can give students the most accurate picture of what they are signing up for.

Equity also means putting students in position to succeed in their courses. For instance, LACCD strives for high completion rates, recognizing that while every student has the potential to be ready for college, different students may need different levels of support. However, not every college will have the same degree of organizational alignment with area high schools. This means additional considerations for high school staff to consider that go beyond the classroom. Indeed, as a dual enrollment advocate at Pasadena City College observed, college schedules often differ from those of high schools. Will students be taking courses after a full day of high school? What might the impacts be on their academic achievement or on their mental health? Understanding the availability of courses and the impact on student schedules can help provide a strong foundation for expanded access and help to determine whether an in-person, online, or hybrid model might make the most sense to emphasize.

Stretch Goal: Promote collaboration between high schools and local colleges to optimize schedules

Where feasible, identifying particularly popular dual enrollment courses and working with local colleges to offer them at convenient times can help support course access for students. Summer courses and offerings that can fit within the typical school day can give more students the opportunity to participate. Colleges might identify professors who have demonstrated an inclination or aptitude for teaching high school students and offer courses by these professors at times that align with the schedules of high schools in their area. This might not always be possible, but striving towards a more collaborative, intentional ecosystem will likely result in a better support system for students.

Practice Area 2: Adopt Proactive Advising Strategies

Sometimes referred to as “intrusive advising” (Mehl 2020), proactive efforts to reach out to students rather than waiting for them to seek support can help avoid surprises and reduce feelings of isolation. Counselors might consider adopting techniques like creating a map of available services that they can offer to students. In addition, developing systems for making contact with professors or instructors to get alerts about students that are missing classes or falling behind on work could afford support staff with time to connect with those students and determine whether it makes sense to stay enrolled. These strategies are particularly effective when high schools, colleges, and non-profit partners are able to act in concert. As demonstrated in the LASIF BROADEN report, fostering a culture of collaboration between high school counselors and college partners makes it easier for students to access support when they need it and for counselors to spot potential problems early enough to intervene.

Program staff from schools and nonprofits that participated in conversations with the Gardner Center offered some excellent examples of what this work can look like in practice as well as the importance of engaging in proactive strategies to create strong webs of support. Practitioners noted that students aren’t always the most forthcoming when challenges arise. To address this, mentors at CYFC offer individual guidance on the importance of attending class and making sure students understand their assignments by checking in after class. Meanwhile, CARECEN connects directly with professors to articulate the need for flexibility and request that students be dropped from the course if they are not attending to avoid the negative consequences of a failing grade. Staff members with the LAPF guide students in communicating with their professors following missed classes or deadlines, observing that while colleges are responsible for the content, high schools are ultimately still responsible for the student. Ongoing progress monitoring allows high schools and nonprofit partners to fulfill this role and connect students with the supports that they have access to as college students, such as tutoring and office hours. Of course, this call for proactive advising also points to an emergent need for data tracking to provide accurate and timely insights, as staff from Alliance College Ready noted. Colleges also recognized a need to provide their faculty with resources and professional development to support dual-enrolled students and provide counselors with information about student progress on a more regular basis.

Stretch goal: Develop a “point person” partner at each institution

Identifying or cultivating a program partner or dual enrollment champion at area colleges can go a long way towards strengthening the web of support for dual-enrolled students. Personal relationships can help advocates to resolve issues quickly, optimize schedules, and bridge the gap between high school and college support networks. Having a “point person” helped CDTech to request that particular courses be offered at convenient times to align with their students’ schedules, while a tireless champion at Pasadena City College was able to disseminate information about dual enrollment offerings throughout a network of high schools. Colleges also recognized the value of a “point person” at each high school.

Practice Area 3: Provide resources to students and their families

Offering information to families about the benefits of dual enrollment as well as the rigor of the courses early on can help to create a unified front and ensure that students are receiving accurate, consistent messaging at home and in school. Information should include facts about timelines, course offerings, and benefits beyond credits, such as the value of early exposure to college-level work and the opportunity to explore career or major pathways. At the same time, students and parents should also be made aware of the challenge associated with college coursework so they can help their children to prepare mentally and academically. This echoes findings from the LASIF BROADEN report. To promote successful outcomes, counselors need to provide students with accurate information about the rigor, time commitment, and value of dual enrollment offerings. Counselors also need to understand the individual goals of their students when it comes to dual enrollment in order to provide relevant guidance.

Looking at examples set by partner organizations points to a few ways of conveying crucial information to families about dual enrollment offerings. Orientations that bring together high school and college counselors can help to get everyone on the same page. Welcome days for incoming high school freshmen can highlight dual enrollment offerings and the benefits these courses can convey. Many parents may not realize, for instance, that dual enrollment can save time and money on a post-secondary credential in addition to helping students be more successful in their high school classes. At the same time, students and parents should be granted an honest portrayal of dual enrollment that considers the benefits as well as the stakes. While concerns about cost can be mitigated, concerns about the rigor of college coursework should be fully explored so that students understand the scope of the challenge that they are taking on and the impacts of a failing grade. This is not to dissuade students from participating, but rather to ensure that they are aware of the expectations in addition to the support services available so that they can select the courses that align with their schedules and goals.

Stretch goal: Provide information about dual enrollment as early as middle school

Several partner organizations reported efforts to introduce dual enrollment programs to students and their families before they reach high school. Early exposure can help families develop a long-term plan and nurture a college-going mindset. For students who are unsure about college or thinking about pursuing a career that does not require a four-year degree, early information can help them and their families identify the professional credentials and career education courses that are available.

Practice Area 4: Make space to build community and “college knowledge”

Aligning with recommendations from youth, effective dual enrollment programs should take into account the demands placed on dual-enrolled students and design spaces for youth to connect with their peers and learn about how to be successful in college. In interviews conducted for the LASIF BROADEN report, students recognized the value of community and recommended that advising services be offered in both one-on-one and small group settings. Students also wished for more opportunities to meet one another and develop relationships with both dual-enrolled peers and college-aged classmates.

Strategies to act on these insights might include identifying affinity groups and clubs on college campuses and encouraging students to participate in order to create bonds with current college students. Group advising sessions can also provide a source of community for students and help them build bonds with peers on similar paths. Even starting smaller with asynchronous offerings like recorded webinars or student group chats can help advisors disseminate knowledge to students about how to prepare for college courses while creating virtual spaces for connection and collaboration.

Staff members at organizations like AVHSD described efforts to build affinity groups into their dual enrollment programming to give students a sense of belonging. For dual-enrolled students, navigating between different campuses can feel isolating or overwhelming; these spaces can help students develop stronger relationships, make plans to enroll in classes together, and support one another with the demands of college-level work. While proactive advising is a valuable tool on its own, giving youth the space to support one another can act as a force multiplier as they are able to share insights about professors, support services, and ways of succeeding in college. In an ideal world, as a staff member at CYFC described, students are surrounded by a circle of people that they know and feel safe with throughout their high school journey as well as in their early forays into post-secondary education, creating a web of support.

Stretch goal: Provide a paired skills seminar to develop “college knowledge”

If schedules permit, pairing dual enrollment offerings with skills seminars or orientation courses can fulfill a dual role of creating community and giving students access to knowledge of the “hidden curriculum,” or the knowledge of how to effectively navigate the administration, self-advocate, and succeed in college-level courses across disciplines. LAPF partners with LA Trade Tech to provide a 1-unit skills course to give students a taste of college while targeting skills like cover letters and professional communication, though fitting this offering around other obligations can be tricky. Pueblo Nuevo also draws on institutional knowledge of community colleges to provide an orientation about drop deadlines, course materials, and expectations for college students that is required for anyone interested in participating in dual

enrollment, while AVHSD revamped their AVID curriculum to include career assessments and guidance on what courses might relate to those interests alongside study skills and time management. These seminars and orientations provide valuable access to knowledge that might not be taught explicitly in college yet is nonetheless integral to success.

Practice Area 5: Identifying Industry, Career, or Major-aligned Sequences

For a program that has found success in implementing one or more of the promising practices described above and seen the emergence of a more robust DE pipeline, beginning to identify sequences of courses that connect to a particular industry, career path, or major can help students get the most out of their dual credit experience. In addition, program staff can begin to lay the groundwork for a more seamless transition between high school and post-secondary education. Making it clear to students how their work in high school will prepare them for a prospective career path or program of study can reduce decision paralysis and administrative hurdles for students while making it easier for high schools and colleges to get on the same page with regard to which courses are likely to be attended by high-schoolers. Students can also balance program-related coursetaking with exploration, completing prerequisites or certificate requirements while getting a taste of a particular industry or major program. In the best case scenario, students can walk away from high school with both a diploma and a post-secondary credential.

This recommendation aligns with calls from participants in the LASIF BROADEN study for counselors to develop more individualized plans that align with a student's particular goals. Adopting this practice requires that advisors and counselors consider the specific needs and goals of their students. For instance, for some high school students, identifying course sequences might look like guiding them towards a particular set of courses that fulfill the requirements for a major program, while for others it might also mean planning out a range of general education courses to give students the opportunity to explore a few prospective fields of study without derailing their progression towards a degree. Constraints like limited availability of advanced coursework and scheduling conflicts may make this more difficult in practice, but students appreciated when counselors and advisors were responsive to their interests and made an effort to develop personalized plans.

Some dual enrollment champions are already working to adopt these strategies. For instance, by starting youth on a dual enrollment track early in high school and providing dedicated academic support along the way, CYFC ensures that foster youth served by their program have the opportunity to graduate with an associates degree. Furthermore, students can get exposure to different industries that help them to connect their academics to a potential career. This may not be possible for all programs, nor should all dual-enrolled students be expected to obtain a post-secondary degree while still in high school. However, as an advisor at Pueblo Nuevo High School recommended, counselors can still approach dual enrollment with sequences in mind by focusing on transferable courses that relate to one another. Program staff at the college level also recommended that dual enrollment programs be implemented with sequences in mind to smooth the credit transfer process.

Stretch goal: Offer tangible products or customized certificates

If possible, working with college administrations to design customized certificates or identify attainable credentials from pre-existing offerings can help establish real connections between courses and career pathways while giving students a valuable signifier of their learning. The Central American Resource Center, for example, offers a sequence of Central American studies courses and is working with their area college to offer a certificate for completing the entire sequence. In another case, schools working in conjunction with college advising staff were able to identify a few additional courses that could be paired with a popular business class to create a path towards a certificate in small business entrepreneurship. Even students enrolled in a one-credit skills course might walk away with a “College Ready” credential to signal their achievement. These tangible products can be used as opportunities to create rituals that recognize student endeavors in dual credit courses and foster a greater sense of community and belonging at the level of the whole program or school.

Conclusion

Drawing on youth participatory action research, interviews with dual enrollment champions in Los Angeles, and an ongoing literature review, this report has attempted to provide a research-backed set of promising practices for counselors, coaches, and mentors interested in expanding equitable access to dual enrollment programs. **These strategies are currently employed to varying degrees by high schools, nonprofits, and colleges to promote access and success. While not every organization will find it practical or necessary to implement every promising practice, assessing their fit can help educators to advance equity and maximize the impact of dual enrollment programming on high school graduation, post-secondary access, and degree or credential attainment.**

Examining the landscape in Los Angeles as a whole reveals how colleges, high schools, and nonprofits can work together and fulfill different roles in a broader dual enrollment ecosystem with the aim of advancing equity in postsecondary attainment. High schools might prioritize options that serve the majority of students, while nonprofits can target particular groups of students and offer more specialized programming. Colleges, meanwhile, can attract more students to campus and set them up for successful completion of certificates or degrees by facilitating efforts by high schools and non-profits to expand access to dual credit offerings.

Dual enrollment programs vary widely from state to state, from city to city, and even from district to district. Future research should examine the efficacy of these practices in different contexts and consider their costs as well as their impacts. More speculative research might examine the ways in which traditional boundaries between high school and post-secondary education can be broken down in more transformative ways. Finally, qualitative studies of implementation in specific schools and CBOs can also help paint a fuller picture of how dual enrollment programs can best be set up to help to drive academic achievement and degree attainment for all students.



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